

EDITORIAL

One important factor which inhibits British UFO authors who wish to expose the dishonesty and unethical behaviour of certain ufologists is our draconian libel laws. There are many disturbing cases outside the UFO field. For example, some years ago a soap opera star successfully sued a newspaper which described him as 'boring'. Even more disturbing is a recent libel case against Demon Internet, which was sued by physicist Dr Laurence Godfrey because it failed to delete defamatory statements about him posted by members of one of their discussion groups when asked to do so. Demon has agreed a settlement of the action which will cost it about £500,000. So be careful what you write about ufology's fraudsters and hucksters.

DIVING TO EARTH

Martin S. Kottmeyer

One of the older metaphors of astronomy and science fiction regards space as a vast ocean with Earth one of its small islands. Rockets crossing this ocean were inevitably regarded as ships. Groups of ships were fleets or navies. They were guided by captains and maintained by crews. If they didn't have sails, they were nevertheless guided by magnetic currents and buffeted by ion storms. Artists at times have playfully rendered this analogy literally with sailing ships of earlier centuries cruising the sea of stars. Japanese SF does this quite often with the example of the *Star Wars* rip-off *Message from Space* (1978) coming first to my mind. *Doctor Who* fans will more readily think of 'Enlightenment'. The early pulps toyed with the idea of aliens floating in the stratosphere, sometimes dropping anchor, sometimes trying to catch us bottom-dwellers. (1)

The most notable of these stories was John Raphael's 'Up Above' (1912) (2). Aliens anchored in the upper atmosphere pick up specimens off the earth in a manner expressly analogous to oceanographers who had been collecting deep-sea flora and fish for the Prince of Monaco's deep-sea museum. Gigantic vacuum diving bells made of a translucent air substance come down and suction up things from the surface. These include humans who are initially bottled and shelved, appropriately pressurized after some trial and error. After a woman goes mad and tears off her clothes, the Sky Folk remove the clothing, then the skin, of other specimens. These include a gorilla, cattle, birds, and more humans. They cut, peel, and probe their specimens with horrible knives, slowly and methodically. Blood is poured into tubes, 'doubtless for examination'. (3) Later, it is evidently poured overboard resulting in rains of blood. In the finale, the ship ends up sinking to the bottom of the air. As rescuers drill into the vessel to rescue a remaining human, inrush of air through a hole in the hull drowns the Sky Folk.

Charles Fort liked the metaphor enough to borrow it in his early ufological musings. He spoke of a Super-Sargasso Sea stretching above us from which fish and frogs were sporadically shaken out. Super-vessels and superconstructions sailed and trawled for goodies. 'I think we're fished for', he wrote. He provided evidence involving luminous bodies having sail-like structures. He also found reports of things looking like hooks and even reproduced a drawing of one sky-hook, the only illustration provided in the set of his writings I have. He offered the thought that the relative isolation of Earth from alien visitation might be analogous to the isolation of deep-sea fishes. The density of our region is too different from theirs to provide easy access. I am sure he would have loved to find and include in his writings reports of alien visitors in diving suits had they existed. None were ever mentioned. (4)

Aliens in diving suits did eventually arrive. They begin to appear in Europe in the 1950s, most prolifically during France's Great Martian Panic of 1954. Talk of diving suits is explicitly mentioned in 9 of 64 entity encounters collected in one case catalogue. (5) Later in the decade such protective gear

is seen on entities in South America. Oddly, folks in the United States reported no space-suited entities until the 1964 Gary Wilcox encounter. (6) They achieve their greatest numbers there in the 1970s. Their range includes Canada, Britain, Australia, Italy, Libya, Poland, Portugal, Brazil, and Argentina.

The frequency of protective-suited aliens has markedly declined in recent decades. A tally of reports collected from various sources and sorted by decade runs like this:

1950s:	22
1960s:	17
1970s:	24
1980s:	5
1990s:	0

There are ambiguities implicit in certain cases. Should a case from the sixties describing five heads in a globe with no body be included or excluded? It might be atmospheric-related, but it might be thought disembodied heads need some sort of travel enclosure regardless of environmental differences. I included it. Should the Travis Walton case be included even though it involves not aliens wearing the helmets, but an apparently human accomplice? It may only look human and be alien. I included it. Should a Gulf Breeze drawing be interpreted as a space-suited alien or an alien sporting a blocky shield analogous to the personal force shields seen in the *Dune* movie? It's included.

Estimates for the 80s and 90s may be low in part due to an absence of entity case catalogues thoroughly covering those decades. Even allowing for such a caveat, the fact of a decline is unlikely to be attributable to sparse research. There is no poverty of accounts of abductions and encounters over the past couple of decades and the rarity of reports of diving-suited entities looks beyond dispute. Linda Howe's *Glimpses of Other Realities* volumes showcase several dozen alien drawings but the only example of a helmeted alien goes back to 1975. Are fewer people seeing diving-suited aliens? Are fewer bothering to report them to ufologists? Are ufologists not bothering to write such reports up for publication? Whatever the reason, space suits are evidently passé these days. They are no longer the fashion among aliens.

Early science fiction writers were cognisant of the fact that scientists had determined that other planets in the solar system had very different atmospheres. Life was thought to be common elsewhere on Copernican assumptions so life evolved to handle those different conditions. Alien visitors should bring along their own air supply, properly pressurised, to survive here. Space-suited aliens are easily found in the early pulps and SF comics. The first generation of cinematic aliens included several space-suited aliens: *The Man from Planet X* (1951), *Phantom from Space* (1953), the infamous *Robot Monster* (1953), and *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (1956). One memorable prelude to alien invasion was a plot by aliens to change our atmosphere, making Earth habitable for them, but wiping us out as an unfortunate side effect.

Though seemingly logical in its day, the argument no longer seems so compelling. We've learned that the other worlds of the solar system are barren and now accept that life may only arise and flourish in certain chemical regimes. Life interacts with the environment and atmosphere in ecological feedback loops that transform the atmosphere to an optimal range of temperatures and chemistries. Life-bearing worlds may convergently evolve atmospheres sufficiently alike to make special protection and breathing mixtures unnecessary. Another factor worth considering is that aliens with technology magical enough to develop interstellar travel may also be magical enough to engineer biological modifications to the alien body that would be less clumsy than diving suits. A special organ grafted on the lungs and, voilà, instant Earthling. A medium consulted by Hans Holzer at one point actually suggested aliens were trying to develop such a set of new lungs. (7)

It is probably doubtful these new considerations had any part in the decline of helmeted aliens. In the matter of film aliens at least, helmets probably were an obvious nuisance to lighting people and effects workers. It is also hard to see aliens as much of a danger if all you have to do to kill them is slice a breathing tube or crack the helmet with a rock.

In the matter of UFO entity reports, some of the distribution over time likely has something to do with the notoriety of certain encounter cases. The peak of space-suited aliens in the seventies in the US seems related to the wide coverage given the controversial Falkville policeman photos during the 1973 wave. The rectangular faceplate apparent in those photos is a detail that recurs in subsequent cases and lasts until the Gulf Breeze case. The Hopkins and Strieber books notably omit any space-suited entities and subsequent aliens tend to echo Greys portrayed in those works. Why Europe favoured the form in the fifties while the US avoided it is more puzzling. The 1952 Monguzzi photo hoax seems the earliest example of the form, but whether it was well known enough to serve as a

template isn't clear. (8) The 1954 Quarouble affair from France is another early case that might have served as prototype. The principal witness initially thought he was looking at spies or smugglers. The drawing looks consistent with a teen wearing a motorcycle helmet. Some later press accounts distorted the story as involving a large-headed being, but deWilde denied this when asked by investigators. (9)

The absence of suited aliens from the US may only represent the happenstance of a suitably detailed popular case not arising. Adamski's Michael Rennie knock-off served as model for the contactees. It is delightful to note that Adamski advanced the extraordinary notion, 'Although the air on all planets differs slightly, contrary to the present beliefs of your scientists, Earth man could go anywhere in the universe without discomfort.' (10) Human lungs could even adapt to living on the moon given about a day's worth of depressurisation. (11) Non-contactees tended to offer little men tales following Dimmick's retrieval rumours, disseminated by AP in 1950, and advanced in Frank Scully's *Variety* columns. (12) The few not following the little men model were a grab bag of random forms so few as to not present a statistical paradox. Even in SF, helmeted aliens were neither universal nor a majority.

If consistency of form should be regarded as evidence for the ETH, then we would do well to consider the inconsistencies among the population of suited aliens. The helmet styles vary widely. Some are perfectly spherical. Some are cylindrical. Some are entirely transparent. Some appear opaque. Some show a faceplate. Most do not. Hoses to a backpack are sometimes visible. They can connect to the top of the helmet or lower down by the rim. Antennae and headlamps are optional. Doubtless this will be rationalised as proof there are many races visiting Earth or that aliens are no different from humans in liking different fashions in their protective wear.

There are broader inconsistencies. Some like to note that the Villas Boas affair now fits in perfectly with the breeding programme of the Greys. Less noted is that the abductors in that affair wore space suits, something those Greys don't bother with much these days. Indeed, the number of abductions involving spacesuit-type headgear throughout saucer history is relatively small. Bullard notes there are only 6 cases in his study that include evidence for a breathing apparatus. He comments, 'This feature is surprisingly scarce across the board, with neither humanoids nor humans requiring the piped-in air essential to our space travellers.' (13) Of those that don't have suits, a few invoke concern about atmospheric incompatibility by having aliens with breathing difficulties. (14) More recently, David Jacobs offers the amazing dodge that Greys simply don't breathe. They don't interact with our atmosphere. (15) This is amazing since biology textbooks regard respiration as a defining trait of life making this a virtual confession they are unreal in some sense, either as an artificial creation deceptively looking like a form of life or simply as fantasy.

Those who regard humans as biological descendants of aliens have an obvious excuse for not having aliens in diving suits. Ditto those who regard aliens as time-travelling descendants of humanity. However, what do they do with those reports of diving suits? Should they be thought individual fashion statements? Maybe some of the entities have environmental sensitivities and others are hardier? Maybe those who are staying awhile are bio-technically adapted while those here for a short sampling tour just wear suits for convenience. Doubtless there are many possibilities.

The absence of diving-suited aliens in Fort's time, the oddity of the initial proliferation confined to Europe, the delayed proliferation in the US, and their later decline all point to cultural effects existing in this category of ufonautics. I have no particular stance on the issue of whether suited aliens are more probable than unsuited ones. The Gaia argument about life-bearing worlds having similar atmospheres sounds right, but the old argument about the need for suits sounded right, too. We have only the examples in our solar system to work with and there may be different ways for life and atmosphere to co-evolve as yet unrealised simply because we need to see the alternatives in operation to find them thinkable. Maybe we shouldn't throw those suits away quite yet. The inevitable quip is that this is all airy speculation.

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NOTES AND NEWS from Nigel Watson =====

The Scareship Mystery. This book, which reviews the airship scares between 1909 and 1918, has now actually been released by Domra Publications. It includes chapters by Granville Oldroyd, David Clarke, Eddie Bullard, Robert Bartholomew, Mr X and Nigel Watson. It can be obtained for £9.95 from Domra Publications, 65 Constable Road, Corby, Northamptonshire NN18 0RT.

Rumours of neo-Nazis. The denial of the Holocaust by historian David Irving brings to light the insidious workings of neo-Nazis and their supporters. Their ideas and weird theories can appear anywhere and in the most innocent of places.

In 1995, Granville Oldroyd and I published a paper titled 'Snow on their Boots' in volume two of *Fortean Studies*. Our report showed how rumours of Russian troops, coming to support the British Expeditionary Force, spread throughout Britain at the beginning of World War I. Our project was to reveal how word-of-mouth and newspapers brought this rumour to life, and how the stories became increasingly bizarre until the cold light of facts killed off this particular sensation.

Two years later we got a request from a new French publication, asking if they could translate and publish our paper in their first edition. We thought this journal would be a French equivalent of the unbiased and apolitical *Fortean Studies*. We gave our permission, but after publication we were very shocked to discover that the journal, *Akribeia*, which was designed to analyse '*histoire, rumeurs, legendes*' contained neo-Nazi material alleging that 'the final solution' did not occur.

Our perfectly innocent denial of a World War I rumour was in consequence used to support the work of the 'Holocaust did not happen' brigade. *Fortean Times* was equally horrified by the use of our material but an option to take legal action would have proved costly and potentially destructive for all parties.

Akribeia is a relatively subtle vehicle for neo-Nazi propaganda. More blatant and weirder Nazi proponents have maintained that the Germans developed flying saucers during World War II. Using such craft, top Nazis, including Hitler, moved to a base in Antarctica and/or the centre of the Earth. Flying saucers have been reported throughout the world since the 1940s because they are still conducting WWII.

Corrydon Hammond, a (respected?) psychologist based in Utah, has gone as far as to say that an alliance of Nazis, CIA and NASA have abused and brainwashed people so that they can eventually rule the world.

The notorious Greys, who pilot flying saucers and abduct unsuspecting victims, are not really aliens, but Nazi clones! The rumours from left and right spread like hot butter, but they leave a bad taste in the mouth.

The David Irving libel case helps to bring back to Earth the silly rumours, beliefs and distortions of reality which neo-Nazis thrive on, and which keep conspiracy mongers awake at night.

Jack it in. In twenty years' time expect stories of a black-cloaked jumping figure with a yellow face and green hair. He is the villain in the comic section of *The Sunday Times*. Children reading the Scooby-Do serial 'Spring-Heeled Jack' are told:

'He's a frightening figure who reportedly terrorised teenage girls in London throughout the 19th century. These days, people who remember him aren't sure where his history ends and the legend begins . . .'

In this adventure the character is haunting a modern-day Sherlock Holmes museum, but I'm sure he'll turn out to be the curator! Anyway, my main point is that children don't need *Fortean Times* when they can learn about the most exotic ghostly legends in mainstream publications. As such stories are assimilated in childhood they could well be triggered in adult life, and what were originally stories might become part of their 'lifetime' of hauntings and paranormal experiences. Or am I just spoiling some childish fun?

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